

Message Text

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ACTION OC-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-06 ISO-00 H-03 L-03 PRS-01 CCO-00 (ADP) W

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R 050855Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1690

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD BY POUCH

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ACOM CPRS CASC

SUBJECT: SHIPMENT OF CONFISCATED ITEMS TO AMERICAN CITIZENS

1. AMERICAN CITIZENS WHO HAVE HAD PERSONAL EFFECTS CONFISCATED BY SOVIET CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES AT BORDER CROSSING POINTS FREQUENTLY PROTEST SUCH ACTIONS WITH THEIR CONGRESSMEN, THE DEPARTMENT, AND/OR DIRECTLY TO THE EMBASSY. IN NUMEROUS INSTANCES, AS A RESULT OF SUCCESSFUL REPRESENTATIONS BY CONSULAR OFFICERS, THE CONFISCATED ARTICLES ARE RETURNED TO THE EMBASSY FOR FORWARDING TO THE INDIVIDUAL INVOLVED. THE SOVIET CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES REFUSE TO RETURN SUCH ITEMS DIRECTLY TO US ADDRESSES.

2. UNTIL NOW, THESE ITEMS HAVE BEEN RETURNED TO THEIR RIGHTFUL OWNERS THROUGH THE DIPLOMATIC POUCH AS OFFICIAL BUSINESS OF THE US GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, RECENTLY, PERHAPS AS A RESULT OF STATE 161916 AND STRICT APPLICATION OF 5 FAM 300, THESE ITEMS (EVEN THOUGH ELIGIBLE AS OFFICIAL MERCHANDISE UNDER 5 FAM 332.2-3) ARE BEING RETURNED BY THE DEPARTMENT'S POUCH ROOM VIA SURFACE POUCH AND MARKED AS INELIGIBLE FOR POUCH TRANSMISSION. MOST RECENTLY TWO POCKET-SIZE ICONS, ILLEGALLY CONFISCATED (THEY WERE DECLARED UPON ENTRY) FROM AN ELDERLY AMERICAN TOURIST AS SHE DEPARTED THE SOVIET UNION AND RETURNED TO THE EMBASSY BY THE SOVIETS, WERE INTERCEPTED BY THE DEPARTMENT ON ROUTE TO THEIR RIGHTFUL OWNER AND RETURNED TO THE EMBASSY.

3. WHILE AT ANY OTHER FOREIGN SERVICE POST IT COULD BE COGENTLY ARGUED THE CONFISCATED ITEMS SHOULD BE RETURNED TO THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OWNER THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL MAILS AT HIS EXPENSE, THIS IS

IMPOSSIBLE IN THE SOVIET UNION SUCH ITEMS WOULD BE REJECTED
ALTOGETHER OR CONFISCATED ONCE AGAIN AS "CONTRABAND" BY SOVIET
POSTAL AUTHORITIES.

4. THE POST DOES HAVE LIMITED APO FACILITIES (NO REGISTERED OR
INSURED ACCEPTED FOR MAILING), BUT OUR APO PRIVILEGES ARE PRESENTLY
SCHEDULED FOR TERMINATION NOVEMBER 11.

5. THE EMBASSY IS PRESENTLY HOLDING TWO SEPARATE GROUPS OF
CONFISCATED ITEMS TO BE RETURNED TO AMERICAN CITIZENS (THE
ABOVE-CITED ICONS AND SEVEN BRONZE STATUES, SOON TO BE RETURNED
AT THE BEHEST OF SENATOR GRIFFIN). THE DEPARTMENT'S ADVICE
AS TO HOW THEY SHOULD BE TRANSMITTED GIVEN THE ABOVE CIRCUMSTANCES
IS URGENTLY REQUESTED.

EXEMPTED

DUBS

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